(a) whether it is a fact that there has been steep rise in prices of essential foodgrains cereals and vegetables during this year;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) how far this affected the lower middle class and poor people in the country;

(d) the steps taken by Government to make essential commodities available at affordable prices for consumers;

(e) whether Government has conducted any study to ascertain the relationship bewteen forward trading and price rise; and

(f) if so, the details and outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) During this year, retail prices of foodgrains have generally been steady. Among cereals mainly rice, showed a marginal increase where as wheat is showing a steady trend in Delhi. Retail prices of some pulses manily tur dal, has shown an upward trend. Retail prices of gram dal have reduced. Retail prices of vegetables have been stablished, Retail prices of potato after reaching a peak of Rs. 16 per kg in Delhi, reduced to 13 per kg and onion from Rs. 27 per kg has been reduced to Rs. 15 per kg. The main reason for inflation in some food articles is inadequate domestic supplies in relation to demand and hardening of international prices of food grains which is on account of diversion of food grains to bio-fuel and animal feed and production losses due to inclement weather conditions.

(c) Government has taken steps to insulates the poorer sections of society from price rise by distributing these commodities through PDS. It has protected vulnerable sections of society through Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and Antodaya Anna Yojna (AAY). Central Issue Prices of wheat and rice have not been revised since 1.07.2002 for APL and BPL, while the Central Issue Prices for AAY has not been revised since the launch of the scheme in December, 2000.

(d) Government is aware of the icnrease in prices of essential commodities such as wheat, pulses and edible oil and has responded by taking a series of measures such as augmenting domestic supplies of wheat and pulses through imports at reduced rates of duty, ban on exports of pulses, wheat and reduction in custom duty of edible oils.

(e) and (f) The Government has not conducted any study so far to ascertain the relationship between forward trading and price rise. However, in the context of debate whether and to wheat extent futures trading has contributed to price rise in agricultural commodities in recent times, the Government has set up an Expert Committee on 2/3/2007 under the Chairmanship of Abhijit Sen, Member Planning Commission to study, *inter alia,* the extent of impact, if any, of future trading on wholesale and retail prices of agricultural commodities. The Expert Committee however have not submitted their Report so far.

Irregularity in import of wheat

†565. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total quantity of wheat imported by Government during the years 2005-06 and 2006-07;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the details of the agencies by whom the wheat was imported alongwith the details of the prices on which the wheat was given to various Government and private undertakings; and

(c) whether any kind of irregularity has been noticed in this regard and if so, what action has been taken with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) There was no import of wheat during 2005-06 on Government account. Orders were placed for import of 55 lakh MTs of wheat in 2006-07 out of which 54.54 lakh tonnes has been delivered upto May, 2007.

(b) The wheat was imported by the State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. during the year 2006-07. The prices at which wheat is allocated to Government and other agencies by the Department of Food and Public Distribution are given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below).

(c) No, Sir.

Statement

Prices at which wheat is allocated to Government and other agencies by Department of Food and Public Distribution

Name of the Scheme	Rate (Rupees/Quintal)
Above Poverty Line (APL)	610
Below Poverty Line (BPL)	415
Antyodaya Anna Yojana	200
Mid Day Meal	415
National Food for Work Programme	415
Nutrition Programme	415
Welfare Institutions & Hostel etc.	415
Annapurna	415
Nutritional Programme for Adolescent Girls	415
World Food Programme	415
Sampoorana Grameen Rojgar Yojana	At Economic Cost
Village Grain Bank Scheme	At Economic Cost
Defence/PMF	At Economic Cost

Mechanism to provide foodgrains to poor persons at affordable rates

566. SHRI RAJ KUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CONUSMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering winding up PDS;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the mechanism proposed to be evolved to make foodgrains available to poor and BPL persons at affordable rates?